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BY:

Affirmation



NATIONAL COUNCIL REPORT

The Affirmation Council met during the national gathering in Atlanta, September 19-22, 1991.

Among the major actions of the Council were these:

- Established May 8-10, 1992, as the dates for the next national gathering in Louisville, Kentucky
- Approved the concept of creating "classes" for positions on the Council
- Adopted the financial report
- Transferred the duties of the Financial Management Team to the Stewardship Committee
- Directed that the treasurer sit with the Council when it is in session
- Reviewed fund raising plans
- Decided not to fill two vacancies on the Council because of the limited time left in the unexpired terms
- Elected Ben Roe to the Board of Directors of the Reconciling Congregation Program
- Met with Regional Organizers to dialogue about local chapter development
- Developed plans for Affirmation's presence at General Conference
- Established the parameters for Affirmation's response to the GCOM's Study Committee on Homosexuality report
- Directed that the Fall 1992 gathering focus on the whole question of sexuality with emphasis on bisexual understanding.

DAY OF PRAYER AND FASTING

On Wednesday, December 4, the General Council on Ministries will vote on how the recommendations from the Study Committee on Homosexuality will be presented on the floor of General Conference. Although it is expected that the recommendations of the Committee will be accepted, it again brings to the forefront the near-twenty year struggle United Methodist lesbians and gays have faced.

Throughout the Bible, the Children of God have turned to prayer and fasting during times of trial and turmoil. On this day, you are called to join with others across the nation in a Day of Prayer and Fasting.

Offer up prayers that:

- 1) Acknowledge God's ultimate authority and your own inequities;
- 2) Call on the Church to repent of its sins of homophobia and heterosexism;
- 3) Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals will no longer be denied full participation in the United Methodist Church;
- 4) Recall those of our sisters and brothers who have been forced to surrender their credentials or have been put in positions where following God's call has been compromised by others' fears and ignorance;
- 5) Acknowledge the lives and loves of those who are no longer physically among us but whose spirits give us strength as we continue the struggle;

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6) Remember those who are dealing with claiming their own sexual identities, particularly young people, and that they know that this identity is truly a gift of God;

7) Remember those who have suffered physically from anti-lesgay attacks and mentally from verbal abuse and innuendoes;

8) Claim the victory of truth, justice, peace and love through Christ over fear, ignorance, war and hate that is our constant visitor.

Fasting is an act of self-denial and cleansing. It is an action showing our willingness to give God unobstructed access. The traditional fast begins at sunup and ends at sundown. It is typically concluded with communion. If you can not be part of a communion service, covenant with at least one other person to share in a common meal. As well as prayer, read from the Scriptures, particularly the Psalms and the story of Esther. There may be other writings that you turn to for reflection.

Be an integral link in a chain of your brothers and sisters. Join with others calling on God to "heed Your children's pleas."



NEWS FROM LOCAL GROUPS

DALLAS AFFIRMATION meets monthly with good fellowship, a potluck and program. The group participated in the Alan Ross Freedom Parade in September. A fall camping trip in November and a Christmas Party is planned for December. For more information call Bruce at [REDACTED].

AUSTIN AFFIRMATION meets monthly for worship and a meeting the first Sunday of the month. In August the group celebrated their 4th Anniversary with a pool party. For more information call Richard at [REDACTED].

AFFIRMATION LOS ANGELES meets on the second Sunday of each month. The group begins with worship followed by a potluck meal and program. Upcoming events include a Christmas party in December and a 10th Anniversary dinner and celebration in January.

MID-ATLANTIC AFFIRMATION meets every Sunday, 6:00 p.m. at Dumbarton UMC for worship and fellowship. Call [REDACTED] for more information.

SACRAMENTO AFFIRMATION meets the first Monday of every month at 7 p.m. at St. Marks UMC. Guest speakers have encouraged lively discussions over the past few months. The group is currently organizing an ecumenical service in the upcoming months. For more information call [REDACTED].

CENTRAL VIRGINIA AFFIRMATION holds their meetings on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of each month. Meetings are held at Pace Memorial UMC at 7:30 p.m. They recently held a Labor Day Pig Roast, Lovefeast and monthly worship services. For more information call [REDACTED].

PLEASE send me your newsletters and information about local group events. It's important to see what other groups are doing in their ministry, outreach, and fellowship. Any questions or comments? Call or write Fritz Schultz, [REDACTED] San Francisco, CA [REDACTED]. My home phone is [REDACTED].

ATTENTION!

SPRING GATHERING

MAY 8, 9 & 10, 1992

Louisville, Kentucky

This will be the middle weekend of General Conference and will give our members the opportunity to see how General Conference operates!

Details in Spring Newsletter!

WITNESS COMMITTEE REPORT

Platform Revision: We have revised Affirmation's platform statement for the 1992 General Conference. The new platform is less defensive and more insistent that the United Methodist Church must address its institutional heterosexism. Naming heterosexism as a sin, we explain how it blocks the mission of the church. We call upon the church to repent of this sin by creating a multi-step program of recognition, restitution and renewal. Although the platform covers new ground for gay, lesbian and bisexual denominational caucuses, it contains planks similar to those fashioned by people of color and women as they called upon the church to address racism and sexism.

Press Briefing: In preparation for General Conference, United Methodist Communications is hosting a three-day briefing for the religious press November 14-16 in Louisville, Kentucky. Morris Floyd will represent Affirmation and distribute the revised platform statement at the briefing. We have also prepared a 2-page statement summarizing our purpose, mission, organization and presence at General Conference for the press.

General Conference Presence: Cooking, writing, visiting, worshipping, organizing, editing, typing, lobbying, supporting, celebrating, nurturing,--your presence will make a difference in Louisville May 5-15, 1992. Plan to come and be a part of our common enterprise if you can. We have reserved rooms at a centrally located hotel, \$60/night for one to four occupants (we plan to line up rooms in local homes for those who can't afford to stay in the hotel). We will staff a hospitality suite, establish covenant groups, publish a newsletter, create a festive dinner, lobby the legislative process (with MFSA) and lead worship. We plan to cluster some of our activities, with our celebratory dinner on Thursday, May 7; a major worship service at

noon on Friday, May 8; and the National Gathering that weekend. If the General Conference proceeds as it did in 1988, petitions dealing with homosexuality will all come to the conference floor on the same day early the next week, probably on Monday, May 11.

Perhaps you'd like to participate but know you can't attend. We will include people "back home" in our covenant groups, so that you can offer and receive support during General Conference. We need people to write articles for the newsletter...it's a lot of space to fill on site. You might write something--about what you appreciate in your local Affirmation group, what it means to come out, why you don't come out, what it's like to worship with a Reconciling Congregation. Perhaps you know something about gay, lesbian and bisexual history or could present statistics or describe encounters with homophobia and heterosexism. Be creative. Send submissions to the post office box marked "G. C. Newsletter" and we'll get them to the editor.

The RCP will organize a prayer vigil during General Conference. Perhaps you can participate. Beyond that, you might assist someone else to attend, by donating money to National Affirmation, by supporting someone who comes from your own community, even by volunteering to watch their home and care for their pets and plants. We can all do something.

Jeanne Knepper
Convener, Witness Committee

IMPORTANT NOTICE!!!

IS THERE A RED "X" ON YOUR MAILING LABEL? IF SO, WE HAVE NOT HEARD FROM YOU IN A VERY LONG TIME. UNFORTUNATELY, THIS WILL BE YOUR FINAL NEWSLETTER. IF YOUR RECORDS SHOW SOMETHING DIFFERENT THAN OURS OR IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP WRITE TO:

JAN OLSON
AFFIRMATION
P.O. Box 1021
EVANSTON, IL 60204

**AMENDMENTS TO THE
AFFIRMATION PLATFORM**

**(Suggested Legislation to be
Presented to General Conference)**

**SECTION ON: "TOWARD A POLITY
FOR INCLUSIVE MINISTRY"**

The United Methodist Church carries out its understanding of the Gospel in church polity. We call upon the church to repent of the sin of heterosexism. Repentance must include recognition, restitution and renewal. We ask the church to recognize its sin by:

- 1) Studying the dynamics of personal homophobia and institutional heterosexism;
- 2) Seeking to understand the ways that heterosexism has oppressed gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in The United Methodist Church;
- 3) Listening to the voices of the lesbians, gay men and bisexuals in its midst.

We further seek restitution, without which no wrong can be set right. In this regard we ask the church to:

- 1) Remove all prohibitory passages concerning homosexuality from the Discipline;
- 2) Balance the membership of all committees, commissions, boards and agencies by deliberately appointing openly gay men and lesbians to those bodies;
- 3) Hire gay men, lesbians and bisexuals to work on the development of education materials on heterosexism, homophobia and homosexuality;
- 4) Establish a Commission on Heterosexism;
- 5) Direct district superintendents to ask congregations what they are doing to reconcile themselves with lesbians, gay men and bisexuals;
- 6) Encourage United Methodist related seminaries to hire self-avowed gay men and lesbians and to teach new and continuing education students about homosexuality, heterosexism and homophobia so that pastors might be

better prepared for ministry;

7) Offer special seminary scholarships to gay men, lesbians and bisexuals to overcome past barriers and recruit them into ministry;

8) Create an annual designated offering day, the proceeds of which are to be split between the Reconciling Congregation Program, National Affirmation, and the scholarship program for gay men, lesbians and bisexuals;

9) Create liturgy and rituals to celebrate our relationships and commemorate our griefs.

When these things have been accomplished, the church will experience renewal. There will be harmony between the message of God's inclusive love and the practice of the churches. No longer will homophobia split families or drive the desperate to doomed marriages. People who have studied the issues will be more comfortable with their own and each other's sexuality and less likely to project their own discomfort onto others. Children will grow up knowing that they are beloved, loved by God and their community regardless of their sexual orientations. Young lovers will be welcomed to grow in the church and will have their relationships blessed by the community. Those who grieve will be held and nurtured so that they might be healed. Lesbians, gay men and bisexuals will bring their gifts and their love to their churches, enriching the life of the community of faith. Surely this is part of the future we seek.

Recognizing that these changes will not all come at once, we call upon the 1992 General Conference to implement the following changes in the Discipline at this meeting:

1. Revise Para. 71F in the following ways:

Delete: "Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, sexual relations are only clearly affirmed in the marriage bond. Sex may become exploitative within as well as outside marriage. We re-

ject all sexual expressions which damage or destroy the humanity God has given us as birthright, and we affirm only that sexual expression which enhances that same humanity, in the midst of diverse opinion as to what constitutes that enhancement."

Substitute: "Although all persons are sexual beings whether or not they are married, not all sexual activity is equally acceptable. We deplore attack, seduction, promiscuity, idolatry of pleasure, violence and exploitation of people. We believe that covenantal relationships which feature gentleness, warmth, compassion, mutuality, fidelity and commitment to one another enhance the humanity God has given us as a birthright."

Also delete: "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian Teaching."

Let the two concluding sentences read: "We affirm that God's grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."

2. Amend Para. 208
so that it reads:

Para. 208: "The United Methodist Church, a fellowship of believers, is part of the Church Universal and celebrates the diversity of its members. (Delete: Therefore) All persons, without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, marital status or economic condition, shall be eligible to attend its worship services, to participate in its programs, and, when they take the appropriate vows, to be admitted into its membership in any local church in the connection."

3. Delete Para. 906.12
which reads:

"The council shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any "gay" caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality. The

council shall have the right to stop such expenditures."

4. Delete Para. 402.2:

"While such persons set apart by the Church for the ministry of Word, Sacrament, and Order are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards represented by the practice of fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness. Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church."

Delete Para. 404.4(e) footnote

Revise Paras. 414.8g & 424.a.6
to read:

"For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as a minister, are you willing to make a complete dedication of yourself to God? Will you agree to live a life disciplined by the mind of Christ in personal habits and social responsibility? Whether married or single, will you commit yourself to constancy, faithfulness and love in all of your relationships? Will you, by the power given unto you, grow (delete: the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end will you agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, social responsibility, and growth) in grace and the knowledge and love of God?

7. In Para.

304.1, 404.4(e), 414.8g,
420.1.8, 424(a)(6), & 431.6

delete so that the paragraph reads "for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of his/her influence as a minister, to make a

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complete dedication of himself/herself to the highest ideal of the Christian life as set forth in Paras. 66-76 and to this end agree to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, fidelity (Delete: in marriage and celibacy in singleness), social responsibility and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God."

8. Add a new Para. 72B
(re-number subsequent paragraphs)

Rights of Lesbians and Gay Men. Homophobia has been the basis of socially encourage and widely practiced discrimination against gay men and lesbians. It has created a climate in which violence against and harassment of these persons is tolerated, rationalized, and even justified by some. To avoid loss of employment, damage to family relationships, and physical danger, many homosexual persons have felt it necessary to hide their identity, at great cost to the fulfillment of their human potential. Their invisibility as a minority has meant that social institutions and agencies, including the church, most often cannot understand or respond adequately to the needs of gay and lesbian people and their families.

We affirm differences in sexual orientation as one of many differences in status in the human family. We hold that persons should not be discriminated against on the basis of sexual orientation, and we call for the creation and effective enforcement of legal sanctions against such discrimination. Further, we urge that religious and social service agencies make affirmative efforts to develop programs sensitive to an respectful of the needs of individuals and families where a same-sex affectional orientation is present.

9. Add to Para. 261.10:

"...shall cooperate with the pastor in planning and caring for worship, music, and other arts, ushering, furnishings appointments, and sacramental elements for experience and worship; shall enable the congrega-

tion to experience the worship styles and contributions of the various racial and ethnic groups; shall cooperate with the pastor to develop liturgies and rituals that serve its members and community; shall recommend standards for the placement in the church of memorial gifts as aids to worship."



**OUR PRESENCE AT
GENERAL CONFERENCE**

We call on The United Methodist Church to repent of its heterosexism. Heterosexism builds barriers between the church and its gay, lesbian, bisexual and single members, robs the church of their gifts, encourages its members to live dualistic, closeted lives, tacitly supports the violence of cultural homophobia and hinders the evangelical mission of the church. We call upon the church to recognize how heterosexism has operated in the church and to make restitution for its damage by creating programs to encourage the full participation of gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in the life and ministry of the church. As a first step, we ask this General Conference to adopt the specific legislation listed in our Platform Statement.

We will offer a ministry of presence at this General Conference. We will have a hospitality room where visitors can talk with us, read literature or take a quiet moment to rest in a supportive space. We will publish a daily newsletter, conduct worship, prepare a festive meal, and work with other caucuses to support appropriate legislation. Members from all over the nation will come to Louisville for our Spring National Gathering during the middle weekend of General Conference. We will be there. We will invite the people who come to General Conference to get to know us. We will challenge The United Methodist Church to drop the barriers, extend a welcome and enrich its ministry.

REGIONAL ORGANIZERS

NORTHEAST

Susan Button
Peggy Gaylord

Binghamton, NY

Tel. [REDACTED]

SOUTHEAST

Clarence R. Norment (Rusty)

Mechanicsville, VA

Tel. [REDACTED]

NORTH CENTRAL

Mike Underhill

Chicago, IL

Tel. [REDACTED]

Marcia Knight

Indianapolis, IN

Tel. [REDACTED]

SOUTH CENTRAL

Ed Young

Dallas, TX

Tel. [REDACTED]

WESTERN

Chad Heilig

Oakland, CA

Tel. [REDACTED]

COUNCIL CONTACT

Fritz Schultz

San Francisco, CA

Tel. [REDACTED]

SUBMISSIONS SOUGHT

Submissions sought for a collection of stories about Gay/Lesbian Christian Experience. Particularly interested in stories about why you may have turned away from God, and came back into the Christian faith, and what your spiritual life is like now. Other testimonies welcome. SASE to Candace Chelley, [REDACTED] Decatur, GA [REDACTED].

Affirmation Financial Report

May 1, 1991 - September 10, 1991

	Budgeted	Actual To Date
Membership	12,500.00	2,855.00
Pledges	8,600.00	1,280.16
Fund Raising	9,000.00	400.00
National Meetings	9,000.00	2,465.00
General Conference	10,000.00	100.00
Interest	0.00	20.58
TOTALS	49,100.00	7,120.74

Advertising	600.00	330.00
Affirmation Council	13,000.00	278.00
Newsletter	2,000.00	164.72
Regional Organizing	4,000.00	666.18
Membership	400.00	70.76
Fund Raising	1,700.00	0.00
RCP Program Grant	4,000.00	2,000.00
RCP Travel	2,000.00	1,002.44
Emerging Issues	1,000.00	592.00
National Meetings	7,500.00	363.80
Postage/Telephone	2,500.00	93.00
Mailbox Monitor	400.00	0.00
General Conference	10,000.00	0.00
TOTALS	49,100.00	4,273.30

NEWSLETTER DEADLINES FOR 1992

	Submission Deadline	Publication Deadline
SPRING	Feb. 21	Mar. 14
SUMMER	May 1	May 22
FALL	July 31	Aug. 21
WINTER	Oct. 30	Nov. 20

The Affirmation Newsletter is published quarterly by Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns. All submissions and letters of inquiry should be addressed to:

Affirmation Newsletter
P.O. Box 1021
Evanston, IL 60204

Bishop Barbara Harris: "Episcopal Church 'pimping' gay and lesbian members"

PHOENIX, AZ. - The Rt. Rev. Barbara Harris, the first woman bishop in the Episcopal Church, urged gay and lesbian church activists not to restrict their efforts to calling the church to take a leadership role in gay rights. Rev Harris addressed a meeting of Integrity, Inc., during the Episcopal Church's national convention in July.

"It's important to choose the battleground carefully," Harris said. "A confused church is not the area in which to fight at this moment. If we win in the courts and in the streets, the church will, kicking and screaming or limping along, follow. It always has, always will. It has never taken the lead," she said.

Some 850 lay and clergy members of the House of Deputies and over 170 members of the House of Bishops wrestled extensively with gay and lesbian issues during the national convention, which meets every three years.

One hotly debated resolution would have created church law explicitly restricting sexual activity for priests to heterosexual marriage. The proposal was described by one opponent as an "ecclesiastical sodomy law - unenforceable, and useful only as a tool to harass gay and lesbian clergy, whose relationships the church refuses to bless." The canon was defeated in both Houses, a move bitterly lamented by conservatives.

Delegates approved a resolution which affirms traditional definitions of heterosexual marriage, admits the pain of members who are homosexual and the inability of church leaders to reach definitive conclusions, and calls for continued study and a pastoral letter from the bishops. The resolution also calls for including gay and lesbian Episcopalians in the dialogue, a major step forward for the church.

The Rt. Rev. Edmond Lee Browning, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church said of Gays and Lesbians, "We don't want the issue to go away. We want Gays and Lesbians to be part of the dialog. Yes, the Episcopal Church welcomes you."

A call to censure two bishops, Walter C. Righter, a former assistant bishop of Newark, N.J., and Ronald C. Haines of Washington, D.C., for ordaining a self-affirming gay man and lesbian, respectively, was also defeated. During debate, two other bishops, Edward Jones of Indianapolis, and Stewart Wood of Michigan, both rose to say that if the censure was passed, their names should be added, because they had also engaged in similar ordinations.

In other action, a resolution calling for the dissemination of a government report dealing with gay youth suicide was passed by the House of Deputies, and a resolution calling for removal of HIV infection from the list of conditions subject to U.S.

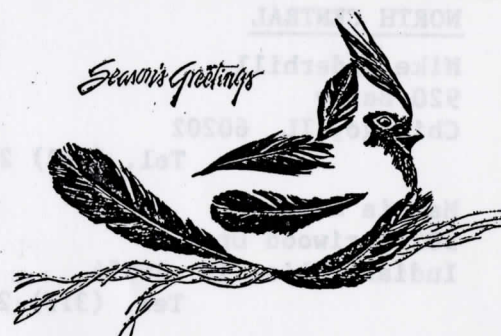
immigration and travel restrictions was passed by the House of Bishops. Neither resolution, however, received the approval of the other House and thus both failed.

Many people attending the convention were distressed by a flyer distributed by a conservative group from a booth in the convention's display area, which carried the title, "Testimony of a F.A.G. - Fornicator, Adulterer, Glutton" and the subtitle, "And how the church can really help homosexual men and lesbian women." The pamphlet was denounced on the floor of the House of Deputies by Patrick Waddell, a deputy from California and past

president of Integrity. "The term 'fag' is a perjorative which is short for 'faggot.' It is as offensive as the term 'nigger' ...and to have it distributed by a semi-official branch of the church is intolerable." The following day, a formal apology was read by the President of the House.

Bishop Harris' speech was frequently interrupted by applause. "In street language, the church is pimping you," she said. "They want your time, talent and treasure, but do not accept your humanity. Nor does the church want you to leave. Because if you leave, they won't have anybody left to beat up on."

Votes on the resolutions followed several mornings of committee hearings and a 2 1/2 hour open hearing attended by nearly 3000. Over 100 speakers had registered to testify, but not all we heard due to time constraints.



George

Wishing You
A Very
MERRY
CHRISTMAS

AND

A HAPPY

NEW YEAR!

The Newsletter Staff



Paul

IN URGENT NEED OF YOUR HELP!

On a national level, Affirmation seeks to provide a wide variety of support to the activities for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and their friends and supporters.

Each issue of the newsletter highlights just some of those activities and programs.

The annual gatherings of the Affirmation family take place each year; the newsletter is published four times annually; regional organizers work with local groups across the nation to provide assistance, encouragement and resources.

In addition, Affirmation continues to be a very visible presence within the structure of the United Methodist Church. That role will be stepped up even more in the coming seven months as we prepare for the next meeting of the General Conference in May.

Every one of Affirmation's programs and activities requires two major resources: human and financial.

We recognize that not everyone can provide human resources for Affirmation's work. But most of us can provide some type of financial re-

source to keep the organization working for us.

As we prepare for General Conference, Affirmation will need more than \$10,000 to underwrite the ministry of presence during the two-week session in Louisville. Funds will be used for publication of a daily newsletter for all members of General Conference, for the preparation and conduct of worship events, to operate Affirmation's office during that time, and to support other activities associated with our presence.

Affirmation can be only as effective as our resources--human and financial--will allow us to be.

The Stewardship Committee is asking all Affirmation members and friends to carefully consider the amount and type of resources you can provide during this critical time in our work and then respond positively to our call for help.

Contributions may be made in a single payment or in the form of a pledge payable over the next seven months. And, remember, contributions to Affirmation qualify for charitable contributions on tax returns.

YES! Count on my financial support of Affirmation's work.

Enclosed is \$_____.

You can also count on me to contribute at least \$_____ between now and May 1, 1992.

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

Return to:

Affirmation
P. O. Box 1022
Evanston, Illinois 60204

